



NEWS & NOTES

MUSIC IN THE AFTERNOON

Women's Musical Club of Toronto

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Kathleen McMorrow

Autumn Newsletters past have reflected on highlights of the spring season, looked forward to coming concerts, celebrated volunteer achievements and scholarship and CDA awards, and encouraged growth of the Club's financial and membership strength.

In 2020 there is really only one topic. The pandemic has thrown us out of an organic world of friends, family, and fun, into a ghostly two-dimensional universe of screens and disembodied talking heads.

The WMCT 2019-2020 [Annual Report](#) offers a sketch of the last seven months of concert cancellations, postponements, reorganization, plans, realignments and further plans, which took place in the heavy atmosphere of changing COVID statistics and unpredictable local government restrictions.

The immediate future for concert music is virtual. And so, for a while, the 123rd season of *Music in the Afternoon* (MitA) will be available only at your desk or in your living room, with physically-distanced performers in empty halls.

The first live-streamed concert on November 12th lacks the community-building features of the usual MitA – an informative TYM lecture, a friendly ticket-desk, assistance



Music in the Afternoon post-concert reception, May 2, 2019 (Photo: James Kippen)

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Michael Bridge (Photo: Bo Huang)

for members with disabilities, the energizing presence of students, social interaction during intermission refreshments, and post-concert mingling with the performers. On the positive side, it fulfills the promise of the musical season we planned (a commitment many presenters have had to abandon), in a state-of-the-art format available to almost everyone in these locked-down days. This event further demonstrates the WMCT's sustained support of young Canadian artists ([Michael Bridge](#) is just emerging from doctoral studies at the U of T) and of new Canadian repertoire through annual commissions. ([Anna Pidgorna](#)'s new piece is on the program).



Anna Pidgorna (Photo: Amanda Bullick)

Important non-concert activities have also continued uninterrupted: the finalists and jury for the [2021 Career Development Award](#) of \$25,000 have been announced; and undergraduate scholarships have been presented to

outstanding students facing a difficult year. Treasurer Janet Murray marched us through nine budget drafts to secure financial stability. A new Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee was established as the WMCT's response to the growing attention in Canada and internationally to issues of anti-racism with particular reference to Black and Indigenous communities' histories and current challenges. The DEI Committee will encourage diversity in Board membership, audiences, and artist selection, and explore diversity training for the Board.

Perhaps you have heard of "*The Machine Stops*," a science fiction short story published by E.M. Forster in 1909. I encountered it as a libretto by Michael Patrick Albano set by student composers for a U of T Opera Division production in 2016.

"The story describes a world in which most of the human population has lost the ability to live on the surface of the Earth. Each individual now lives in isolation below ground in a standard room, with all bodily and spiritual needs met by the omnipotent, global Machine. Communication is made via a kind of instant messaging/video conferencing machine with which people conduct their only activity: the sharing of ideas and what passes for knowledge." (Wikipedia)

The Machine gradually becomes an object of veneration, and things do not end well.

Forster's startlingly visionary fiction did not anticipate that humans would, while accepting and even growing accustomed to physical isolation, use a machine to make closer connections to distant friends and families, and to share artistic presentations with expanded audiences.

Until we can meet again in Walter Hall to enjoy *Music in the Afternoon* unmasked and shoulder to shoulder, I hope you have enjoyable Zoom visits, and are entertained by the recitals, operas, and other local and international creative events available on video.

Kathleen McMorrow is the WMCT President, Website Administrator and Co-Chair of the Media Relations Subcommittee.



Kathleen McMorrow

TURKEY FEATHERS & PENGUIN SUITS: DOES IT MATTER WHAT MUSICIANS WEAR?

By Annette Sanger

Although many say that a classical musical performance should be all about sound, and that visual aspects such as a musician's attire should not be a distraction, various orchestras and soloists on contemporary stages would seem to challenge that notion. If we step into the world of popular music we witness flamboyant and often daring dress, some of the most notable examples in recent history being David Bowie, Madonna, and Lady Gaga. Arguably the most outrageous and indulgent musician ever, particularly for his time, was a classical pianist turned showman, Liberace, whose costumes ranged from a cape of hot pink turkey feathers weighing 200 pounds to a 300-pound rhinestone suit with white mink. Liberace himself weighed merely 175 pounds!



Liberace

All this is in stark contrast to the usual black, with a dash of white, especially in orchestras that generally have strict rules around what their members wear. Typically, men wear uniform suits, shirts and ties/bow ties whereas women have more leeway in dress style, length and material, although pants are often not allowed. Even as recently as 2018, the New York Philharmonic did not allow women to wear pants for formal evening concerts, though they were allowed at matinees and when playing in contemporary music ensembles. The Regina Symphony (where our Artistic Director, Simon Fryer, is principal cellist) has recently created what they call a gender-neutral dress for all musicians – a smart move as we are encouraged to embrace different shades of the formerly inflexible male-female divide. However, black still predominates, so there's little of interest for our eyes.

In the world of soloists, by contrast, women usually wear long, pretty gowns, for example the colourful floral one

worn by soprano Jane Archibald at our superb 17 November 2019 concert. Some female soloists, most notably pianist [Yuja Wang](#), set tongues wagging with more risqué, skimpy attire such as mini-skirts, thigh-high split gowns and backless dresses, and reviewers often denounce her choices. She likely feels they are part of her personality, and they of course add an interesting visual element to her performance. And, one American musicologist, Melanie Lust, suggests that “any attempt to replace formality with personality should be celebrated instead of shunned.”

Male soloists, by and large, opt for penguin suits, and are sartorially indistinguishable from the orchestral musicians with whom they perform. A notable exception is the brilliant young violinist Blake Pouliot – WMCT CDA winner in 2018 – who is a trailblazer in the push to discard dull and black for more dramatic and striking outfits. Pouliot will be performing for *Music in the Afternoon* in our next season, and I for one am looking forward to a spectacular audio-visual experience of the music and personality of this exceptional artist.

Annette Sanger is the WMCT Vice-President and Chair of the CDA and DEI Committees



Jane Archibald (Photo: James Kippen)

After endless hours of assessment, brainstorming and research, the Committee has arrived at a hybrid season of temporarily virtual and hoped-for in-person concerts. To my relief, the season has not been cancelled, although the first concert was postponed to next June.

If being nimble and resilient is the cornerstone of success in this age, *Music in the Afternoon*’s Executive Committee has personified these traits. Our thanks go out to President Kathleen McMorrow, Past Presidents Diane Martello, Annette Sanger, and Julia Smith, Treasurer Janet Murray, and Administrator Shannon Perreault for their selfless efforts in preserving the WCMT’s unbroken record of 123 concert seasons, against all odds.

Let’s also think about what the WMCT’s continuity means for artists and students. We are offering artists the chance – now difficult to find – to perform and be paid for concerts this season.

Perhaps most daunting of all, for many young musicians who have managed to return to school the complications and hardships are much greater this year; jobs which funded their education have disappeared, much learning is virtual, ensemble work is curtailed or suspended. The WMCT is stalwart, however, in offering its scholarships to the University of Toronto (\$8000 for undergrad, \$4000 for graduate studies), and the Glenn Gould School (\$13,000). When funds permit we also provide scholarships to the Banff Centre for the Arts, the National Youth Orchestra of Canada, and the Toronto Summer Music Festival. And every three years the WMCT offers its Career Development Award, worth \$25,000, to a Canadian musician on the cusp of a professional career.

We will soon be launching our Holiday Appeal, asking for your support for these scholarships. [Please consider donating](#). You will be contributing to the future of chamber music not just now, but in the years to come... and you will help support our young Canadian artists through these (nearly) unprecedented times.

Kathy Halliday is a WMCT Board Member and Fundraising Committee member.



(L to R) Annette Sanger and Kathy Halliday, April 15, 2019
(Photo: James Kippen)

STRENGTH AND SUSTAINABILITY

By Kathy Halliday

As a newish member of the WMCT’s Board of Directors, I have had a ringside seat in watching the Executive Committee tackle the effects of the pandemic. This group has, since early March, been working tirelessly to save the 2020-2021 season. They have closely assessed the members’ demographics and interests, watched policies taken by other arts organizations, followed measures put in place by orchestras and performing arts groups, and worked hard to balance the safety requirements of our New State of Being with a dedication to keeping *Music in the Afternoon* available for both members and performers.

PRESENTING THE WMCT 2020-2021 SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

By Susan Johnston

Emily Bosenius, a violinist, is this year's recipient of the WMCT's Centennial Scholarship. Emily is in her third year at the University of Toronto's Faculty of Music, studying with Jonathon Crow. She already has an outstanding résumé, having played with the TSO Youth Orchestra and the National Youth Orchestra, among others. Emily was born in Edmonton, but now lives in Mississauga with her family (and her pet guinea pig Felix), and, like all students this term, is having to cope with COVID-19 restrictions. Despite much course work being presented online, she is still able to get to personal lesson and chamber group meetings downtown.



Emily Bosenius (Photo: Alice Hong)

Hee-Soo Yoon, also a violinist, received this year's WMCT 110th Anniversary Scholarship. She was born in Victoria and grew up in B.C., although most of her musical education has been in the U.S. She graduated from both the New England Conservatory of Music and the Juilliard School before deciding to come to the Royal Conservatory's Glenn Gould School to study with Mayumi Seiler. She too has a most impressive CV, including a solo performance of Vivaldi's "Spring" with Bramwell Tovey and the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra. Despite the problems presented by the pandemic, and being new to Toronto, she is determined to succeed in her musical career.

To hear these extraordinary young musicians, please visit



Hee-Soo Yoon

the [WMCT website](#).

Our third scholarship, the WMCT Graduate Fellowship, has not yet been assigned by the U of T's Faculty of Music, but the winner's name and details will be posted to our website as soon as we receive them. We hope to present a live concert of our award winners sometime in the (reasonably) near future. We will keep you posted!

Susan Johnston is the WMCT Archivist, Scholarship Recital Liaison and Awards Chair.

WMCT 2020 AGM GOES VIRTUAL

By Shannon Perreault

WMCT Annual General Meetings of years past have been sociable events, held at picturesque venues, including Scholarship Winners' Recitals and light refreshments. Due to current social gathering limits imposed to combat the spread of COVID-19, this year's AGM was a bare-bones Zoom affair. Although all business and no play, it was heartening to see some newer faces in virtual attendance and all went smoothly. Many thanks to all those members who took part and supported the ongoing good governance of the WMCT.



(L to R) Annette Sanger, Lynda Moon, Dianne Henderson, and Julia Smith attending last year's AGM

*Shannon Perreault is the
WMCT's Arts Administrator.*

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